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***State Assembly Passes Legislation to Require Background Checks
On All Handgun Ammunition Purchases***

(Sacramento, CA) The California State Assembly today approved legislation to require background checks on anyone wishing to purchase handgun ammunition. Assembly Bill 362, introduced by Assistant Assembly Majority Leader Kevin de León and supported by Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca and L.A.P.D. Chief William Bratton, is designed to keep ammunition that fuels California's rising gun crimes out of the hands of kids, criminals and gang-bangers.

"There should be no reason that right now someone can walk into a store and easily pull a box of bullets off of the shelf and buy them without someone first checking to make sure that they aren't a gang member or convicted felon," said Assistant Majority Leader Kevin de León. "If spray paint, cigarettes, and cold medicines must by law be locked up behind a counter, then bullets -- a product with the potential to maim and kill -- should be too."

More than 60% of all murders in California are committed with handguns. In Los Angeles alone, of the 478 homicides in 2005, over 80% involved a firearm, while nearly 60% of all those murders were committed by gang members. A recent RAND Corporation study found that in just a two month period in Los Angeles, felons purchased over 10,000 rounds of ammunition from neighborhood gun shops and sporting goods stores.

"In communities across the state bullets are ending up in guns and in the wrong hands, and AB 362 would cut off that easy access to such ammunition," said Assistant Assembly Majority Leader Kevin de León. "In a state where guns outnumber people, there must be regulations on the sale and distribution of handgun ammunition to prevent felons and gang members from easily buying and using it to terrorize our communities."

AB 362 would require, beginning next year, that handgun ammunition dealers register with the Department of Justice; currently, not a single law enforcement agency tracks who is selling ammunition in California. The measure further creates a framework for background checks on purchasers of handgun ammunition, requires the behind-the-counter storage of handgun ammunition by retail sellers, bans internet transactions of ammunition sales, and requires the Department of Justice to conduct background checks on handgun ammunition purchasers. It additionally expresses the intent of the Legislature to adopt background checks for all handgun ammunition sales by 2011 and set up the necessary framework to implement such a system.

The bill now heads to the Senate and will be heard in July.

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